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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000993

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: PARTIES TRYING TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON KING

REF: A. KATHMANDU 971
[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 969
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 948

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) As pro-democracy demonstrations continued throughout the country and in Kathmandu on April 17, the twelfth day of the seven-party alliance general strike, media reported that the King had invited former Prime Ministers to the Palace to talk. Party leaders expected seven-party alliance members Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress-Democratic President, and G.P. Koirala, Nepali Congress President to refuse the invitation. In a bid to increase pressure on the King to restore democracy to the people, the seven-party alliance on April 16 announced further programs to intensify peaceful movement countrywide. Maoist leader Prachanda promised "if the protest movement intensified" the Maoists would "continue to support the stir in a peaceful manner." The government increased the area where protests were prohibited in Kathmandu to include within 200 meters outside of the Ring Road. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) confirmed that plainclothes Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) soldiers had infiltrated a political party rally in Nepalgunj on April 10. End Summary.

King Invites Former Prime Ministers to Palace

[1](#)2. (C) On the afternoon of April 17, media reported that the King had invited all former Prime Ministers to the Palace in Kathmandu to talk. Gopal Man Shrestha, Nepali Congress-Democratic Central Committee Member, told Emboff that, while the current leaders of the seven-party alliance, Sher Bahadur Deuba (3 times PM between 1995 and 2005) and G.P. Koirala (3 times PM between 1991 and 2001), would not participate, he thought that Lokendra Bahadur Chand (4 times PM between 1983-2003), Surya Bahadur Thapa (5 times PM between 1963 and 2004, and current President of RJP Party), Marich Man Singh Shrestha (1986-1990), and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai (2 times PM between 1990 and 2000) would

participate. Anil Jha, Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anunda-Devi) Central Committee member, concurred. Sushil Koirala, Nepali Congress Central Committee member, expressed surprise that the King would even think of inviting only G.P. Koirala, as the King had "failed to acknowledge the existence of the seven-party alliance." He opined that the alliance did not care if those not in the seven-party alliance met with the King, as it had "nothing to do with us." Other NC sources denied the media reports and said that there had been no such invitation extended to Koirala.

Parties Plan Massive Meeting for April 20

¶3. (U) On April 16, in a bid to increase pressure on the King to restore democracy to the people, the seven-party alliance's People's Movement Coordination Committee announced further programs to intensify its peaceful movement countrywide. The Parties asked common people, business people, security forces, Maoists, overseas Nepalese, and the international community to do their part to join the Parties' peaceful non-cooperation movement to pressure the King. The Parties urged all people to boycott products of all industries where members of the royal family had an interest; called on business people not to pay taxes, VAT and customs duties until the restoration of total democracy; appealed to security forces to disobey orders to shoot at people; asked the Maoists to cooperate with the peaceful protest programs of the alliance and abide by the 12-point understanding; urged overseas Nepalese not to send any remittances until autocracy was brought to an end; and asked the international community not to give aid to the government. The Parties also announced that the alliance, with the active participation of people from various walks of life, would hold a massive march through the 27-km long Ring Road in Kathmandu on April 20. The alliance called on people of different social strata to take part in the April 20 march and to make the continued general strike a success by defying the prohibitory orders of the government.

Protests and General Strike Continue in Kathmandu...

¶4. (C) Pro-democracy demonstrations continued throughout the country and in Kathmandu on April 17, the twelfth day of the seven-party alliance general strike. After a relatively quiet New Year's Day on April 14, protests resumed on April 15 following the Parties' call to "aggressively enforce" the general strike in response to the King's disappointing New Year's Day message (ref A). Shops that were open on April 14 closed on April 15. Few vehicles reportedly entered the Kathmandu Valley, causing shortages and price hikes (septel).

The Embassy could not confirm a statement made by a RNA major who started that the RNA started escorting vehicle convoys to Kathmandu with air cover on April 16. The managing director of local Buddha Air told Emboff that the Parties were strongly pressuring private airlines to halt air service inside Nepal, but that planes were currently flying. Emboffs observed few motorized vehicles on the roads on April 15, 16 or 17. Many press vehicles and taxis seen operating on April 16 in Kathmandu had shattered windows and police reported protesters attacked four vehicles on April 16 and eleven vehicles on April 17 in Kathmandu. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported witnessing demonstrators attacking a motorcyclist for defying the Parties' strike on April 16 and Emboffs witnessed a burned-out vehicle in the middle of the road in Kathmandu. On April 16, OHCHR reported that in Kathmandu there was, "overall, less police violence in spite of protests being several thousand strong." Kathmandu police reported arresting 25 demonstrators on April 16, and five on April 17. While many demonstrations resulted in injuries to protesters and security forces, there were no reported demonstration-related fatalities on April 14-16. (Note: OHCHR reported four demonstration-related deaths between April 6 and April 16. End note.) However, OHCHR witnessed police firing buckshot at demonstrators near Kirtipur, in Kathmandu Valley on April 16.

... In Larger Numbers Nationwide

¶15. (C) Pro-democracy demonstrations outside Kathmandu continued to draw large numbers of supporters. Media reported large protests in many cities throughout the country on April 16, including several thousand demonstrators each in Biratnagar, Bharatpur, Butwal, Pokhara, and Nepalgunj. An RNA source in Bharatpur, Chitwan District, estimated over 30,000 people gathered there peacefully on April 16 and 17. Although many suspected that Maoists participated, the demonstrations were peaceful. He noted his unit was also on "high alert" for a Maoist attack. RNA contacts in Nepalgunj, Janakpur, and Biratnagar also reported peaceful protests of a few thousand people on the morning of April 17. A local official in Rupandehi District noted that the protests in Butwal and Bhairawa were large and "plainly out of control of the Parties." He explained that Maoists were forcing people from surrounding villages to participate in the daily demonstrations.

Maoist Leader Denounces King's Message

¶16. (U) Maoist leader Prachanda reacted to the King's New Year's message in an interview in the April 14 weekly vernacular Samay magazine, accusing the King of "feudal stubbornness." He commented, "by reiterating calls for general elections within a year, the King and Royal Army have made it clear that they want to continue their rule over people and country." Prachanda noted that, "if the protest movement intensified," the Maoists would "continue to support the stir in a peaceful manner," implying that the Maoists would continue to use violence if the peaceful action did not bring the desired results.

Parties: No Stopping People's Movement...

¶17. (C) Mid-level Party leaders noted that the pro-democracy movement had gained such momentum that the King would have to transfer power to the political parties. Arjun Narsingh KC, Nepali Congress Central Committee member, told Emboff that "unless the King transfers power to the people, there is no question of stopping the movement." He explained that the Parties were now urging all people to support the pro-democracy movement, including the international community, whom the Parties were asking not to provide any assistance to Nepal until democracy was restored. He noted that, while the 1990 movement was centered in Kathmandu and five Districts, now there were demonstrations in 70 out of 75 Districts in Nepal. Thus, compared to 1990, the countryside was joining the pro-democracy movement. KP Oli, United Marxist Leninist Central Committee member, also stressed that the Parties' non-cooperation movement was gaining momentum, including support from businesses and the international community. He told Emboff the Parties would continue their general strike and demonstrations until the King agreed to the reinstatement of Parliament.

...or Maybe Even Controlling it

¶18. (C) Oli warned that if the King did not act, then soon the movement could be out of control of political leaders, as people were increasingly calling for a republic. He noted that the demonstrations were "more aggressive" outside the valley and admitted that "in some places" there were not enough Party cadre to control the demonstrations. Echoing this sentiment, Minendra Rijal, Nepali Congress Democratic spokesman, spoke to Emboff from the domestic airport, saying he was flying to Biratnagar "to give leadership" to demonstrations there. Anil Jha, Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anunda-Devi) Central Committee member, acknowledged that the movement was more vigorous outside the Kathmandu Valley than inside, but explained that the police were preventing people from entering the valley, whereas many people from rural

areas were joining protests in towns and cities throughout the country.

Government Expands Protest Ban;
Continues to Detain Protesters

¶9. (C) On April 16, the District Administration Offices of Kathmandu and Lalitpur expanded areas where activities including gatherings, processions, and sit-ins that could "disturb law and order" were prohibited. In addition to all areas within the Ring Road, the government now prohibited these actions 200 meters outside the Ring Road as well, effective until further notice. From April 14 to 17, the government continued arresting and detaining some protesters, and releasing others. On April 14, the OHCHR confirmed that the government had released 72 National Bar Association lawyers, 60 NGO, and 50 INGO workers detained on April 13 (ref B). However, OHCHR reported "considerable problems" gaining access on April 14 and 15 to other detainees held at the Armed Police Force Headquarters. These detainees included 22 people the government arrested in Gongabu and 21 arrested in Kirtipur, both hotspots. OHCHR was still working to confirm the whereabouts of 23 other people reported as missing after demonstrating in Gongabu and Kirtipur.

OHCHR Confirms RNA Infiltration

¶10. (C) On April 17, OHCHR told Emboff that it had confirmed that several plainclothes soldiers were in a Party demonstration in Nepalgunj (western Nepal) on April 10, each carrying a grenade (ref C). Originally OHCHR could not confirm the infiltration, as the alleged soldiers fled the scene. However, on April 13, OHCHR visited Kohalpur Army Barracks and recognized one person from the demonstration as an RNA private. The RNA confirmed his presence in the demonstration and acknowledged that as many as ten soldiers in plainclothes had been present among the demonstrators on April 10. OHCHR noted concern that the RNA had misled OHCHR on three occasions regarding this incident and expressed "serious questions regarding the role of plain-clothed undercover RNA personnel in demonstrations." OHCHR was raising the issue with RNA leadership.

Comment

¶11. (C) Until the King acts concretely to turn power over to the Parties, demonstrations throughout the country look to continue and intensify. His invitation to former Prime Ministers to talks at the Palace, however, looks more like a ploy to split the Parties than a positive gesture. Since the only UML Prime Minister has long since passed away, the invitation to former Prime Ministers clearly (and presumably intentionally) excludes consultations with anyone from one of Nepal's two largest parties.

MORIARTY